

aims at a mark and knows what it is after. When we enter a store or shop we ask the salesman to hand us the particular article we want. There is an immense amount of pointless praying done in our devotional meetings; it begins with nothing and ends nowhere. The model prayers mentioned in the Bible were short and right to the mark. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Lord, save me!" cries sinking Peter. "Come down ere my child die!" exclaims the heart-stricken nobleman. Those men knew what they wanted. Old Rowland Hill used to say: "I like short ejaculatory prayer; it reaches heaven before the devil can get a shot at it."

(3) In the next place, the prayer that has influence with God must be a prepaid prayer; if we expect a letter to reach its destination we put a stamp on it; otherwise it goes to the Dead Letter Office. There is what may be called a Dead Prayer Office, and thousands of well-worded petitions get buried up there. All of God's promises have their conditions; we must comply with these conditions, or we can not expect the blessings coupled with the promises. We must be sure that we are doing our part if we expect God to do his part. There is a legitimate sense in which every Christian should do his utmost for the answering of his own prayers. When a certain venerable minister was called on to pray at a missionary convention he first fumbled in his pocket, and when he had tossed a bank-note into the plate, he said: "I can not pray until I have given something." He prepaid his own prayer.

When I hear requests for prayer for the conversion of a son or a daughter, I say to myself—how much is that parent doing to win that child to Christ? The godly wife who makes her daily life attractive to a husband has a right to ask God for the conversion of that husband. She is co-operating with the Holy Spirit and prepaying her heart's request. God never defaults; but he requires that we prove our faith by our works, and that we never ask for a blessing that we are not willing to labor for, and to make any sacrifice to secure that longed-for blessing.

(4) Another essential of prevailing prayer is that it be the prayer of faith, and be offered in the name of Jesus Christ. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The chief "wrestling" that we have to do is not with any reluctance on God's part but with the obstacles which sin and unbelief put in our pathway. What providence orders we must submit to uncomplainingly; but we must never submit to what God can better. Never submit to be blocked in any pious purpose or benevolent undertaking if with the divine help you can roll the blocks out of your path. The faith that works while it prays commonly conquers—for such faith creates such a condition of things that our heavenly Father can wisely hear us and help us.

The firmament of Bible history blazes with answers to effectual prayer, from the days when Elijah unlocked the heavens on to the days when petitions in the house of John Mark unlocked the dungeon and brought the liberated Peter into their presence! The early Church was born in a prayer meeting held in that "upper room" at Jerusalem. During my own pastoral experience the most powerful revivals in my Church showed the first indications of the Holy Spirit's pres-

ence when we were "gathered with one accord" in our devotional meeting. The prayer room is the place to hang the church thermometer. That thermometer "below zero" indicates both the cause and the effect of a terrible spiritual declension. When a pastor and even a few dead-earnest members of his church begin to feel a tremendous responsibility for souls and an insatiable hunger for a descent of the Spirit, then there will be effectual praying, and the Church will be under the baptism of fire from on high.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Devotional and Selections

PREDESTINATION.

When God did entertain His earliest thoughts of me,
If it was on that day when man began to be,
If in those primal hours when earth and sea and sun
Created were, or e'en ere time had yet begun,
I know not now, and in the flesh I never will;
Of His own thoughts I've formed a part, and I'll be still.

How much that makes my life His portion 'tis to do,
If to create and know the things He always knew,
And leave the daily life entirely to me,
To reason, mold, design, perform, "an agent free,"
I know not now, and in the flesh I never will;
'Tis for my best He asks, and I dare not be still.

Or does He reach this side the stars down here to me,
My little barque to steer upon this stormy sea?
Does He steer or do I; do I veer or does He?
Does He decree or just permit these storms at sea?
O God, the whole of life is Thou and I, below—
I mean—great God, I mean—oh, do Thou have it so!
—Mrs. L. O. D. Edwards.

THE CHOIR.

In the olden days one man with sonorous voice took his place before the people as a "precentor," and so led the tune that the congregation were able to join their voices in the Psalm. His position with a printed liturgy was analogous to that of the clergyman who "led in prayer." Not only does the minister pray, but the people are supposed to pray; merely the minister "leads."

Later, the sacred office of precentor was, as large congregations necessitated stronger leading voices, laid upon the choir and organ. The choir and organist are the high priest in the church service; they lead in "offering the sacrifice of praise." It is thus a sacred and a solemn office.

No minister would go into the pulpit to preach his own thoughts, to give some empty bit of glittering oratory; he is there to preach Christ and him crucified. So, too, the choir is where it is and what it is, that it may fill a certain place in the worship of God. For that reason it can not exist to afford expression to the aesthetic tastes of its several members, to afford opportunity for individual or collective vocal display, or even to uphold a classical and cultured standard of church music. These may in themselves be proper things; but the stage or opera house is the place for vocal gymnastics or philharmonic exhibitions. The whole duty of the choir in the house of God is to lead the service of praise.